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THESIS

PREPARED AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF

BACHELOR OF ARTS,

By JOSIAH ROYCE, '75.

THE INTENTION OF THE PROMETHEUS BOUND OF ÆSCHYLUS,

BEING

*An Investigation in the Department of Greek Theology.*

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THE INTENTION OF THE PROMETHEUS BOUND OF ÆSCHYLUS.

PREFATORY NOTE.

The following discussion, having been prepared as a scholastic exercise, amid other duties and with considerable haste, is necessarily very incomplete, and no doubt any one who has paid any attention to the subject discussed will see a great deal in it that needs entire remodeling. I have prepared it chiefly in the hope that the work done on it may be sometime of value to myself in future researches on kindred topics, and not at all in the expectation of affecting the views of any who have already formed views as to the nature and intentions of the Prometheus Bound. In fact, as will be seen, Greek Theology plays a much more prominent part in the discussion than does the play itself. But what I have been able to accomplish with limited time, limited resources as regards authorities, and limited reading to begin with I let go for what it is worth. If some means could be obtained by which the University Library could be enlarged in facilities of purchasing books, so that authorities on all subjects of such interest in literature as this is, could be at hand for the use of students, no doubt such investigations as the one here attempted could and would become more numerous and more successful on the part of those of our number who are engaged in these studies.

J. R. '75.

There are some questions in the literature of antiquity which have an interest far more than literary. Such questions are those that relate to the customs, to the ideas of nature, or to the religious beliefs and life of the ancients. Of many of these it is true that merely to appreciate them in all their bearings would require that we should be able to enter into the inmost social existence of peoples of whom time has left us but the most fragmentary information; while a full understanding of the whole matter would include in addition that knowledge of the whole chain of causation from the beginning of human history which must ever remain doubly obscured. Such questions fascinate us and yet elude us, demand our earnest investigation, and yet refuse to be satisfied by any answer we may try to give them. We may approximate to the truth, but can never attain certainty. To this class belongs the question of which the fol-

lowing investigation will treat. Primarily, it is a question relating to the intention of a single and unique work of a remarkable and original genius. But in its answer, could it be fully given, would lie a full exposition of the whole religious consciousness of the Greeks, both as regards developement, and as regards condition at the time when the tragedy of which we are to speak was written. Of course such a question is not here advanced with the expectation of setting it at rest, even in my own mind. But as has been said, this one point may be the occasion of some interesting study in the department of Greek Theology, and thus may be the means of clearing up some features of a very important phase of ancient life. And thus, from this standpoint, the search after truth may be, in this case, much more profitable than the possession of the bare unsuggestive truth itself would be, had a fuller preservation of ancient works of art left it in our hands without any exertion on our part.

In the investigation of the subject, I shall endeavor to reduce all the considerations under four heads; first, a general statement of the problem in its entirety; second, a statement and special discussion of a few of the theories that have been advanced in explanation of it; third, a general discussion of the religious condition of the Greeks who heard the play originally; and fourth, the discussion of the question proper in the light of what will have been up to that time brought forward. If material errors have been avoided we shall then have some idea perhaps of what influence Æschylus intended his drama to have upon his audience. It must be remembered however that the first two heads are in danger of lacking completeness and justness of treatment: that the third head may fail both as regards completeness, and as regards correctness; while the fourth head will have its own special dangers, in addition to the unsoundness of treatment that the accumulated errors of the preceding parts of the argument may involve it in. But all these perils are incident to the subject, and cannot be avoided. I mention them at the outset, only in order to show that I have more hope of benefit from the pursuit, than of success in attaining the object.



## SECTION I.

The Prometheus Bound of Æschylus is one of seven tragedies which alone remain to us from the works of this author. It is well known that Æschylus was in the habit of bringing forward his dramas in trilogies, or sets of three, the three being presented at one time, and having a regular narrative or artistic connection. In fact, one of these trilogies remains to us entire. This treats of the fortunes of the house of Agamemnon after the time of the hero's return from the Trojan war. But the remaining four of the preserved dramas of the same author, are not connected by any tie, but are independent works. Two or three of them were, however, without doubt, members of trilogies of which the remaining members have been lost. And there is good evidence that the Prometheus Bound was also the member of a trilogy. Two other plays by Æschylus are mentioned as bearing the title Prometheus. One of these, the *Προμηθεύς πύρρυνος* was a satyric drama(*a*), and was represented at the end of the trilogy of which the Persæ is a member. The other was entitled the *Προμηθεύς λυόμενος*. It was a tragedy of the style of the one which we possess, and a fragment of considerable length is preserved from it, in translation, in a passage in Cicero. It has been generally admitted that this tragedy was connected with the *Προμηθεύς δεσμότης* in representation. If so, there was, no doubt, a third drama to complete the trilogy, but of what this was we have no information. But Hermann, the famous critic of Æschylus, has thrown doubts on the connection of the two tragedies, and these doubts will be further mentioned hereafter. It is sufficient for the present to state that, whatever be the problems suggested by the Prometheus Bound, we must be dependent for their solution, in so far as the direct study of the author is concerned, almost wholly on the text of the play itself. If its connection with the other members of a trilogy would have made the matter clearer, we are deprived of the help that could thus have been obtained by the fact that the other members of the trilogy are lost, and that only a few fragments remain to give us any idea of but a single one of them, that even these fragments are some of them of uncertain character, and finally that the play to which they belong may not have been a member of the trilogy at all.

The difficulties for which the Prometheus Bound is celebrated

will be easily appreciated by means of a momentary consideration of the argument, in connection with the legend on which the whole is founded. Prometheus, according to the old legend, was distinguished by the fact that, although himself a Titan, he devoted himself to bettering the condition of mankind, in opposition to the commands of Zeus. In several cases he accomplished his ends. He outwitted Zeus as to the choice of that part of the sacrificial victim which should be the portion of the gods. He stole fire from heaven, and bestowed it upon men, thereby raising them above their former abject condition. In addition he taught them a great variety of arts. For all these things, done in opposition to the commands of Zeus, he was finally chained by the order of the latter to a high mountain-peak, where he was tortured by a vulture. After remaining here for a vast length of time, he was released by Hercules, with the permission of Zeus.

This original form of the legend, indicates, though not very strongly, an opposition between the will of Zeus and the welfare of the human race, and an espousal on the part of Prometheus of the latter against the former. But any idea of this kind is very much obscured by the fantastic and sometimes ludicrous dress in which the story is put. It is little more than a piece of folk-lore, told, and apparently invented, for the pure love of amusement. But Æschylus, dropping all about it that was of a less noble character, (b) has made of it a lofty ideal conception, (c) in which the opposition between Prometheus and Zeus is intensified, is still more identified with an opposition represented as existing between the welfare of mankind and the plans of Zeus, and, furthermore, is in all appearances represented as an opposition of the feeble oppressed against the tyrant, and of the noble-hearted benefactor against the false, ungrateful, unreasoning, monarch, whose rule is the rule of force.

Now this representation was made before an audience who verily believed in a real Zeus as the ruler of all things, and who had not any doubt that some such occurrence as the one that formed the subject of the myth of Prometheus, had taken place. This occurrence, believed perhaps by the poet himself to be an actual fact, was distorted from the received accounts, (d) was, in other words, misrepresented, was portrayed in such a manner as to put the father of gods and men in the worst possible light, was turned into a glorification of human prosperity



and its causes at the expense of the divine character; and all this was done before a populace that were notably pious, and by a poet who was a great representative of the national religion. What could have been the intention of such an effort? What was its effect? How shall we explain this singular phenomenon? This is, in a short space, the statement of the gist of our problem.

If we consider the play portion by portion, we shall not be much assisted. For we find at every step remarks, descriptions, events introduced which serve only to glorify Prometheus. In the first scene, occurrences are made to follow one another in such a way as to strike us with horror at the brutality with which the hero-god is treated. In the two following scenes everything that could be done is done to move us to admire the strength of soul which enables him to rise above his anguish, and to condemn the wanton cruelty and the base ingratitude of his oppressor and ours. In the scene next following, where Io is brought upon the stage, our horror is increased to a loathing, and our condemnation is forced to the point of open enmity with this "king of the immortals," who lives only that others may suffer. And, in the final catastrophe of the play, all the feelings that have been aroused are gathered to a grand climax as the undeserved punishments are heaped upon the unconquerable victim. If this be the supreme deity, we say, then away with him from the heavens.

In its entirety then, the problem of the Prometheus Bound is briefly this. A great tragedy comes to us as one of a few remaining works of a difficult and deepminded poet. This tragedy has nothing by the same author with which we can compare it to get a better understanding of it. If it had any companion piece which helped to elucidate it, only a few useless fragments, and these merely supposed to belong to that production, are left to us. Now this tragedy has much in it that would apparently shock the piety of every Athenian who heard it. And yet we have excellent reason for knowing that it did not shock the piety of any one, or at least of any considerable number. How was all this possible? And, what, at any rate, was the reason for so much license on the part of the author? Did he not at least run a great risk of giving offense? If he did, why should he have chosen to run that risk? If he did not, how was it that an effect which we feel so strongly was lost on an Athenian of the generation that had seen with its own eyes, or

that believed it had seen, the gods and heroes assisting it against the Persian invader? So much then for the statement of our problem. Now let us review briefly some of the views advanced in attempting to solve it.

## SECTION II.

The critical explanations of the Prometheus of Æschylus may be divided into two great classes. The first class comprises those which consider that the view of the relations of Prometheus and Zeus which this production gives, is intended to be materially modified by the effect of those members of the trilogy which originally accompanied it in representation. The second class comprises the explanations which regard the play as we have it as essentially independent, or at least as being sufficient to produce by its own unaided representation the effect desired. The first class of views(*e*) includes those held by a later school of critics, prominent among whom is Schoemann, a German philologist, and the author of a monograph entitled "*Des Æschylus Gefesselter Prometheus*." The second class comprises the views which depend on the most obvious interpretation of the drama, and which seem to me to be preferable. These views, in one form or another, have the support of the names of Welcker, Hermann, Schütz and others. In addition to these among the critics, many prominent poets have in various ways indicated their adherence to some one of the opinions classed under this latter head. Let us first consider some of the views comprised in the first class, merely of course, noticing their prominent features, and not entering into any amount of details concerning them.

The prominent characteristic of these views is, as has been stated, their assumption that we must not draw inferences from the play as taken alone, that we must consider it as only one act in a great drama which the companion members of the trilogy completed. They claim that it is quite possible that the entire effect of the whole drama should have differed greatly from the single effect of this one piece, and that the subordination of the part to the whole was sufficient to prevent the author from becoming amenable to the charge of impiety. So far these views are in accordance with one another. But beyond this point they differ widely. And the ground for their difference lies in the fact that in trying to find how the effect of the Prometheus Bound was influenced by the general effect of the

whole trilogy, their authors come to the consideration of the matter with various *a priori* theories of the condition of the Athenian mind in regard to religious matters. Each critic endeavors to discover how the dramatist and his hearers stood with reference to their reverence for Zeus, their admiration for Prometheus, their belief in the ancient myths, the nature of their piety in general. Each, furthermore, seeks to reconstruct the Prometheus Loosed on the basis of his theory. The utmost he can hope to prove is that this theory is consistent, and more or less probable. For, as has been mentioned before, the fragments of the Prometheus Loosed are too meagre to afford any means of arriving certainly at the truth. The Prometheus Loosed having been thus reconstructed the critic proceeds to show how, according to his view, the effect of the whole representation need not have been at all shocking to the piety of the Athenians, and may have even tended to glorify Zeus.

Of course such a method of escaping difficulties opens an indefinite number of ways, and gives rise to endless theoretic combinations. It is founded on the idea that the uncomprehended must be explained by the unknown. It is obviously possible to give the unknown any desired form, according to our preconceived notions of how the uncomprehended should be explained. And so, while each one of these theories may assist in throwing light on Greek Theology, no one of them can, by the nature of the case, be made more than faintly probable. Each one of them is obliged in the end to seek support from an adoption of the other method, that which depends on an examination of the drama as it stands. But without further arguing as to the necessary character of such theories as these of the first class, let us proceed to consider a few of them in detail. And first we shall mention that of Dissen and Dr. Julius Caesar(<sup>f</sup>). This theory admits that the Zeus of the tragedy remaining to us is an inexorable tyrant, and that he cannot be justified. It admits, also, that the Zeus of the Athenians, who was worshipped as the Supreme, could not have been conceived of in such a light as this, and that the representation of him in that light would wound the piety of the spectators. Therefore, it is claimed that in the following member of the trilogy, in the Prometheus Loosed, Zeus must have been represented as the forgiving, the just, the morally Supreme, as well as the physical ruler. In this capacity it must have been that he loosed Prometheus and was reconciled to him. Now how were two such contrary conceptions



of Zeus possible in two successive and connected dramas? The answer to this question, according to the view of Dissen, lies in the fact that the two plays are intended to represent a kind of evolution of the divine world, from the time of the Titans until the present. The reign of the Titans was a reign of force and of terror. From this, by the power of Zeus, the universe was freed, and a new system of things was introduced. But the accomplishment of this end was attended with a desperate struggle. Violence and exaggeration on both sides were natural, and did in fact exist. And the Prometheus Bound is the portrayal of the last scene in this tremendous warfare. Says Dissen "I therefore look upon the tyrannical character of Zeus" "exhibited in the Prometheus Bound, as only a transition state" "of things which is to vanish with the final establishment of the" "new order of things to be represented in the third piece. . ."

" . . . Jove, jealous of his power, . . . will not tolerate the" "higher elevation of man till such time as he—so I view the" "relation—being reconciled to Prometheus, is at the same" "time reconciled to the new order of the world, and is brought" "to the insight that it is better to reign over ennobled men," "than over creatures little better than the brutes. For Jove" "also must have come forth from that terrible Titanic struggle," "not with his original character, but with a higher consciousness. Force and forcible rule were essential elements of the" "Titanic period, in which one celestial power after another de-" "throned its predecessor; in perfect keeping with which gen-" "eral character it is, that the Jove of that epoch is haughty," "despotic, etc., even because he forms the transition between" "the old and the new, till, with the conclusion of the Titanic" "struggles, a higher phasis appears." The trilogy is therefore, from this critic's point of view, a glorification of the new state of things, and its significance to the Athenian audience was dependent on that grand development of the Hellenic mind to which the end of the Persian war led the way. So the poetic meaning of the trilogy was this: We, the Athenians, have passed in a few years, from obscurity to glory. We have seen a terror which has oppressed us for generations, removed. We have utterly defeated the armies of the Great King. We have gained wealth and power. A new life is opening before us. Even so, in the days when the Titans were overthrown, the world passes from darkness into light, from an ancient rule of lawlessness and terror, to a new existence of light and progress, from the

terrible to the beautiful. Zeus is now provident, merciful, just. In the days when he smote the giants, he was otherwise. And this is the reason why he oppressed Prometheus, the benefactor of mankind. This was the reason why he wished mankind themselves to remain weak and ignorant. But time taught him to act differently. The harmony of the new life gradually took the place of the discord of the old. And peace and security came to the gods, as victory and prosperity have now come to us.

This theory is of course ingenious, and it is also really fascinating. But it encounters one great objection at the very outset. And that is that theories of the sort could be manufactured to order by the dozen. For, as we are utterly at a loss to tell the drift of the Prometheus Loosed, one guess is as good as another, and the field for guessing is next to unlimited. Suppose that we admit that the intention of Æschylus may have been such a one as this, and that we can bring no special argument against the idea. Yet, on the other hand, as the whole depends on a supposition as to the unknown argument of the Prometheus Loosed, nothing but consistency can be urged in favor of it. It is an example of what we have spoken of before, the uncomprehended explained by the unknown.

But there is an argument drawn from the play before us, directly against this theory. And that is that in the whole action of the Prometheus Bound, there is nothing to indicate that a better order of things has even commenced, and nothing to foreshadow a change for the better in Zeus. All the action is consumed in making us feel how terrible is the rapacity, the ingratitude, the lustfulness, and, worse than all, the power of Zeus. If the main object of the trilogy is to indicate an evolution in the character of the Supreme Ruler of all things, why should so much time be spent in showing how cruel, how debased, how hateful he is? Why are the chorus made to listen to the moans of Io, only to be forced to express the hope that no one of their number may ever attract the eye of Zeus? Why should so much stress be laid on the grandeur of Prometheus himself, and on his implacable enmity, (and just enmity) towards the king of the immortals? Certainly Æschylus must have violated unity of purpose, or else the intention which Dissen ascribes to him was not in his mind.

We shall not be able to spend any great length of time in the discussion of any one of the theories which may be brought



forward, and we must therefore hasten on to the next. This is (g) simply that in the play before us it is intended to permit Prometheus to state his own side of the question at issue between himself and Zeus, that he in reality misrepresents the whole affair, that, by a masterly stroke of poetic art, the author in the following member of the trilogy has shown the falseness of his pretensions, that in a word, Prometheus is a perfect Iago, in mendacity and in baseness. If he persuades the chorus to mourn for him, he does so because the chorus is credulous, and believes him too easily. He is justly punished, and the Prometheus Loosed is intended at once to display the justice of his fate, and to portray the final and inevitable submission to which he is driven.

It will be sufficient here to affirm what we shall endeavour to prove more fully further on, that the conception given us of Prometheus is too lofty to admit of any such theory as this. If in the Prometheus Loosed the poet altered the character of his hero, he could only have done it at the expense of the artistic value of his poem. We do not believe in the nobility of the character of the hero on the evidence of his own words, but we are assured of it by the poet himself, by the surroundings he gives to the hero, by the light in which he places him. The reputation of Æschylus depends on the proper sustaining of this character, and not the reputation of Prometheus on the events that are brought on the stage in the representation of the next following member of the Trilogy.

One more theory, falling within the class now under consideration, will be treated before we pass on to the consideration of the theories included under the second class. This one is the theory of Schoeman, which is shared by many other eminent continental scholars, and which received the adhesion of Prof. Blackie of Edinburgh many years ago. The account I give of it is drawn from Mr. Blackie himself.

This theory, like all the others of both classes, holds that the Athenians did not consider the Prometheus Bound as in any degree an impious work. But the reason for this lay in the fact that the effect which the representation of the oppression of Prometheus has upon us is altogether different from the effect which it must have had on the minds of the Athenians who first witnessed it. They came to it thoroughly prepossessed in favor of Zeus. They believed that Prometheus sinned in the theft of the fire, and that he was justly punished. They were prepared

to see him oppressed with great evils. Still they did not consider that his sin was an unpardonable one. His punishment, though severe, was not to last forever. He was to be subdued to the will of the Supreme by a long course of afflictions. But when he should be subdued, he was to be admitted once more to favor. They never themselves thought of questioning the unrivaled supremacy of Zeus. They believed it a crime that any inferior deity like Prometheus should attempt to do so. Believing it a crime they watched with interest, not of course unmixed with sympathy, the punishment and its effect. Moreover, they were not confined as we are to the sight of the worst portion of the punishment only. They were able to witness, in the Prometheus Loosed, the submission and the reconciliation of the Titan. And thus they were enabled to understand, as we can never do, how the will of the rebellious subject was conformed to that of the Supreme Ruler, how Zeus could be severe and yet just, how he could have a right to do all that he did, how, in short, the myth contained for them an important moral lesson, in addition to much aesthetic enjoyment.

It is in place here, I think, to advance what seems to me a fatal objection to this theory, an objection founded on the fact that the Prometheus Bound is not a moral treatise, but a work of art, and that it must be judged strictly as such. The objection applies specially to this theory and to the former, but is also applicable to the first theory mentioned. This objection needs to be unfolded at length.

In a tragedy, the feelings of the spectator must be aroused with reference to a single event or course of events. All the feelings aroused must be of related or compatible kinds. They must, in other words, form a single chain. If episodes are introduced, they too must conduce, artistically at least, to the one great end before them. Above all, no feelings should ever be aroused which are positively opposed to the great feelings which the work in its entirety is intended to arouse. No great tragedy was ever written in which this was to any degree done. The principle laid down holds alike in ancient and modern art. Whatever may be said about unity of place or of time, nobody has ever had any doubts as to unity of purpose.

Now I affirm that, if Æschylus really did write the Prometheus with the intention above mentioned, if the following play explained the whole matter clearly, if a moral lesson of the sort claimed was conveyed, then Æschylus violated the great prin-

ciple we have just laid down. For feelings are aroused in the Prometheus Bound which are entirely opposed to any such intention. I care not now what the theological belief of the Athenian audience may have been. I ask no admissions as to the state of their prepossessions in favor of either party in the contest. They may have had any opinion whatever concerning either Prometheus or Zeus as deities of the popular mythology. I desire nothing to be granted here save that they were a sensitive, sympathetic audience, who came prepossessed with the belief that they were going to receive pleasure from the representation of the Promethean Trilogy. Consider them as such and then judge of the effects which they experienced.

The strange prologue to the drama, with its rough coarse cruel orders and jests on the one hand, and its impotent lamentations of useless sympathy on the other, while Prometheus lies silent and undemonstrative before his enemies and his helpless friends, it is at least impressive, is it not? But how is it impressive? How else but in that it is a means of at once glorifying the hero-Titan, and of exciting our sympathy for him. And this is done at the very beginning. Is this effect suffered to die out? By no means. It increases at every step. The first great speech of Prometheus when left alone with Nature, how full it is of grandeur, of sudden changes of feeling, of delicate shades of thought. And if there be anything wanting to make us feel that the author is absorbed in Prometheus, that he is the centre around which the feeling is to play, the missing proof is supplied in that magnificent lamentation occurring in the first conversation with the Chorus:—

εἰ γάρ μ' ὑπὸ γῆν νερθεύει Δ' Αἰδου  
 τοῦ νεκροδέγμονος εἰς ἀπέραντον  
 Τάρταρον ἤκειν,  
 δεσμοῖς ἀλύτοις ἀγρίοις πελάσας,  
 ὥς μήτε θεὸς μήτε τις ἄλλος  
 τοῖσδ' ἐπεγῆδει  
 νυν δ' αἰδέριον κίνυγμ' ὁ τάλας  
 ἐχθροῖς ἐπὶ χάρτα πέπονθα.

The wording of this passage, the flowing of its rhythm, cannot fail to excite mingled admiration and sympathy for the hero. And that one little expression in which Prometheus describes himself in the words αἰδέριον κίνυγμα, is to my mind

expressive of the extent to which the feelings of the author are centred upon the hero. The expression is one peculiarly Æschylean in its obscure suggestiveness. Prometheus is after all but a dreamy object, seen far up in the air on the mountain-peak, *trembling* in the light and in the vapor; yet in that object what a world of divinity and suffering is bound up. Such an indication is but a small one, yet it is a member of a large class, to be collected in all parts of the drama, all of which point to the great aim of glorifying and rendering interesting the person of Prometheus.

But, says the supporter of the theory, Prometheus is glorified as Milton has glorified Satan(*h*). He is made to appear great, he is given some noble qualities, but after all he is the enemy of the Supreme, and the Athenians regarded him as we regard Milton's Satan. The answer is, that the two cases are not parallel. With all his great qualities Milton's Satan is still devilish. He not only rebels against the physical power of the Deity, but he wars against virtue, and lays plans for the destruction of a world. But Prometheus is not only courageous, but he is kind-hearted, honorable and just. And still more, the intention of the drama is, not only to glorify Prometheus, but further to make Zeus appear hateful. And here the parallel with *Paradise Lost* ceases entirely. There is no attempt in the Prometheus to "justify the ways of God to man."

The episode of Io furnishes still another argument(*i*) for our view. It is utterly irreconcilable with the intention attributed by the theorist to the poet. If poetry has any power whatever, it is made use of in this episode to arouse pity and anger in our minds; pity for the woes inflicted, anger at the cruelty that inflicts them. And the effect is continued throughout the whole episode, even up to the moment when that shuddering song of the chorus terminates the scene with the fervent prayer that no one of their number may ever excite the passion of Zeus, for better is a quiet sea-nymph life in the ocean depths, than the love of a tyrant such as this one.

The last scene, so celebrated in Greek literature, is the culmination of all these effects. In scenic grandeur and in beauty of language it brings to bear every influence upon our minds to make us pity, fear, sympathize, respect, just as the poet would have us, without regard to the relative stations in mythology of the parties to the action.

In short, if the Greeks were not devoid of a sense of justice



and of the power of poetic appreciation, they must have been deeply aroused against Zeus by the poem throughout. Anger and grief were alike excited, anger at the oppressor, grief at the oppressed. And if to arouse such emotions was an impiety, then Æschylus committed that impiety. But if we are agreed that Æschylus was not guilty of impiety in this production, then are we bound to find if possible some explanation of his real intention and of the causes which preserved him from the apparent danger that lay in his path.

Having thus far endeavored to vindicate the principle on which the theories of the second class are founded, namely the fact that this play really is capable, taken alone, of producing the intended effect, and is therefore practically an independent work we are now prepared for the special consideration of the subject. But to follow our plan we have yet to consider the various theories of the second class by themselves. Space permits however only a short discussion of them. In fact it is not necessary to enter as largely into remarks upon them as we have done in stating the others, for on the general question we have already seen reason for agreeing with all of them. They are very numerous, but have nearly all one tendency. They almost universally assume that on account of the nature of the Greek religious belief, an attack made on the character of Zeus in a tragedy like this would not excite popular opposition. Why Æschylus should make this attack is a subject of much difference of opinion. According to some, he looked back on the older mythology with a feeling of deep reverence which the new mythology did not excite in his mind. His thoughts dwelt with devotion on the old rule of the Titans, and the new *ταῖος τῶν μακαραίων* was a source of regret and rebellion to him. But the view is unsupported by his other remaining dramas, where he exhibits himself as a devout worshipper of the national gods. The same argument holds good against the view that Æschylus was a disbeliever in the popular mythology, and wished to discourage or to attack it. Schütz holds that under the guise of Zeus the poet intended to depict the typical tyrant, and that he desired to inspire his countrymen with fear and hate for every species of despotism. Of course it is very doubtful whether a Greek dramatist would be apt to write on such a subject with an especially political aim. Still it cannot be denied that this opinion of Schutz has more of plausibility about it than have some of the other theories.



Still other and more poetical views find in the character of Prometheus a representative of Humanity itself, or else of some obscure thought of a divine benefactor of and sufferer for Humanity. But these views attribute to the poet ideas that never dawned upon the world until long afterwards, when conquest and commerce had so united mankind as to enable them for the first time to perceive and be influenced by their own unity.

### SECTION III.

The study of individual opinions has prepared the way, I think, for a clearer understanding of the problem itself. It is now evident that there can be but little doubt of the fact that in some manner the drama before us accomplished its end without shocking the piety of those who witnessed it. It has besides been made probable, I hope, that the hero in it is intended to appear in a favorable light, and that Zeus is intended to be exhibited in a very unfavorable light. Our business is simply to reconcile these two facts. I shall try to accomplish this partly by an *a priori* consideration as to the religious condition of the average Athenian audience of the time at which this drama was written. I shall endeavor to investigate the nature of the piety for which the Greeks were famous, and to show what it entailed, and what it left unaffected. In this investigation, I believe, will be found a plausible, although only a partial explanation of the difficulty which we are considering.

I must first say that the following train of thought has been mainly suggested by a profound and fruitful remark made by Hermann, in his dissertation on the Prometheus Bound, and quoted by Mr. Grote in his cursory remarks on the same subject. And this remark may as well be quoted here, to serve as a sort of text for what will follow—:

“Immo illud admirari oportet quod quam de singulis Diis indignissima quæque crederent, [Græci] tamen ubi, sine certo nomine, Deum dicebant, immunem ab omni vitio, summaque sanctitate præditum intelligebant.”

“Indeed it should be a subject of wonder, that although the Greeks believed numberless disgraceful things about individual deities, yet when they mention the Deity, without assigning a special name, they understood a being free from every evil, and endued with the highest holiness.”

Piety in any people, is a feeling of a decidedly definite character. Reverence, love, and devotion to supernatural powers,

or in some cases to moral principles, are what it consists of. But it is a noticeable fact that the supernatural may be believed in without the existence of any pious emotion, just as, on the other hand the deepest piety, in a person of a strong religious temperament, may be found existing almost without any belief in the supernatural; It is necessary therefore, in order for us to understand this quality, that we should find out what are the real objects which excite it, and what sort of mental condition its existence forces to coexist with it.

We are not now, of course, inquiring into the origin of the belief in the supernatural. We are discussing only under what circumstances the supernatural gives rise to the emotions of piety, and what quality it is in the supernatural that arouses them.

First of all I affirm that there is nothing *primarily* in the notions of First Cause, or of Designer, or of Intelligent Supernatural Being, which would excite the emotions of religious reverence. Instead of this being true, the fact is that men worship the supernatural for one of three reasons; because they believe it to be terrible, not terrible with a special purpose in view, but essentially and irresistibly potent and dangerous; or because they look upon it as the source and embodiment of justice and morality; or because they consider that they find in it that which impresses them as noble, high, ideal, beautiful. To express my meaning in the neater form of a Greek terminology, a terminology which is scarcely translatable, τὸ Δείον is august or reverend because it partakes of τὸ δεινόν, or of τὸ ἀγαθόν, or of τὸ κάλον, either separately or together. These three qualities then, when attributed by mankind to the supernatural, or even when attributed to beings not supernatural, or to mental abstractions, arouse the emotions of piety. Now these emotions are shocked either when those who feel them become all at once assured that they have been mistaken in attributing them to the object of worship, or when an affirmation is made against the object of worship in respect to whichever quality is attributed to it.

Now mythology and theology contain a vast number of creations which do not excite any of these emotions, and which never have excited them. The reason for their existence lies in the fact that mythology very largely consists of personifications of the powers of nature, of the small as well as the great, and only a portion of nature is capable of arousing the emotions which

we have above spoken of. And again, even personifications of the greatest powers of nature, may, by the force of untoward circumstances, pass through a legendary degeneration that shall render them unworthy of worship. Hence, in case of a nation which has a rich mythology, a great portion of the Pantheon never excites the emotions of true piety. On the other hand, in case of a nation that for one reason or another has rid itself of much of its early mythology, one or two leading ideas, which have something of the fearful, the righteous, or the beautiful about them, may be worshipped in the persons of a comparatively few great divinities, who fill the whole room and entirely obscure the lesser supernatural members of the circle of deities. Thus a nation may have a mythology nearly or quite coincident with the range of its true worship, and it may have an immense mythological ~~treasure~~ of names and legends which have no real connection ~~whatever~~ with its religion. We shall fall into a dangerous confusion of ideas then, if we think that all the supernatural world of any people is to be called an object of piety to that people.

Now if we come to consider the Greeks, we shall find that for a variety of reasons, and from a variety of sources, native and foreign, they had ~~collected~~ an immensely rich mythology. But their range of real worship was comparatively limited. Not but that the Greeks had alters enough, and sacrificed to gods enough. But in fact they worshipped only a few Ideas, and these they found no difficulty in connecting together, and forming from them a conception of one Deity, who was much more the object of their piety than were the thousands of petty divinities whose names they invoked. These few Ideas were those of the Beautiful in all its forms, and of certain of the principles of right. These principally they worshipped, for the terrible in Nature never occupied much of their attention. Thus they believed in a supernatural world full of life, but were always more inclined to play with this world than to worship it; they did worship the individuals in it only in so far as they recognized in them the exposition of certain principles or Ideas; and, finally, it was easy for them to rise to the conception of one Deity in whose person all these Ideas would find their perfect embodiment.

One more thing must be noticed regarding them, and that is the ease with which at different moments, they could change their entire conception of the supernatural world, according to

the state of mind in which they were. Take for example Homer, who tried above all things to develop a consistent system of theology. At one time Zeus is the ruler of the gods, undisputed, unlimited. He can command all, and can by brute force overcome all. But at other times we find him outwitted by his wife, fearful of entering into contest with his brother, and even, as we are told, on one occasion bound by some of the minor gods, and incapable of releasing himself without aid. Take again the conception of the Moeræ or Fates throughout the whole mythology. At times they are mere abstractions. Again they are real beings subject to Zeus. Still again they are unapproachable powers whose decisions Zeus himself must submit to, and cannot foresee. Now these are matters not of trivial mythological importance, but they relate to theories of the government of the Cosmos. And yet the Greek mind, exact and careful as it was about some things, could skip from one to another of them, and never feel the difference.

Furthermore, the god whom a Greek was worshipping was for the moment, in some cases the greatest of the gods to him. Apollo is thus now and then treated as if he were the sole deity. And a god invoked by various surnames, seemed to be a different being under each one.

It now remains for us to see what an effect all this must have had on the way in which a Greek might speak of the various gods, or malign their reputation without wounding his own piety. In the first place then, it has been shown that wounded piety is the result of the maligning of the real object of worship. We have also further seen that the real object of worship is some quality recognized as existing in the supernatural, and not the supernatural itself as such. In the second place we have found that the Greeks had a very extended supernatural world, in which they were in the habit, as their fancy led them, of making fantastic changes. We have still more discovered that, as to persons, they were very careless indeed, changing qualities and names, interchanging legends, altering relative positions in the scale of pre-eminence. Now what should we expect from all this but that we should find them at times worshipping, under a given name, the personification of some great idea, and at times, under the same name, describing a being of a base or cruel character? And should we expect that such an action would arouse any scruples of conscience in their breasts? On the other hand shall we not discover that the worship of Ideas

only, is their real worship, and that the persons are altered to suit their fancy, subject only to a few general limitations of tradition?

Now as to Zeus in particular. We find that this deity descends to the Greek Mythology from the primitive Indo-European religion. In coming down he receives a great number of characteristics. And as he finally comes before us, nothing can be more diversified than the representation we have of him alone. He is the Supreme Deity himself, sometimes, and then all the other divinities sink into mere demi-gods. But at other times he is merely the symbol of the universal generating power of nature. And again he is only the god of storms. Still again he is the god who puts enemies to flight, and is invoked under a special surname as such. And as invoked under surnames, he yet further appears as the god who protects the right of suppliants, as the god who preserves the sanctity of oaths, as the god who guards the inviolability of the hearth, and as filling numberless other offices, each of which would be enough to engage all the attention of a respectable inhabitant of Olympus, and each of which, if I am right does, in the minds of those who pray to him, absorb all the others at the moment when it is mentioned.

Now it is in his capacity of protector, avenger of wrongs, august lord of what is grand in nature, that the Greek worships Zeus. But if a legend is mentioned which is degrading to the character of the Supreme, the vivacious votary of the gods takes it up, relates it, dwells upon it, believes it to be an actual fact perhaps, but never imagines that he is doing any violence to the Supreme whom he really does worship by narrating or believing such things of the legendary deity of the same name, never in fact thinks of the being in the legend as the same with the Supreme, but enjoys the story as to the one, and reverently bows in worship to the other, and goes his way without inquiring as to his own consistency.

A Greek with the keenness of thought of one of the later philosophers, could not have done this. The latter were inclined to banish the mythology altogether, because it was so inconsistent, or to allegorize it, because it was so beautiful. But to one of the audience of Æschylus, I am convinced that the condition of mind which I have described was native and undisturbed. If you attracted him by a beautiful ideal, you could arouse what feelings you desired, against whomsoever



you would, provided that you did not make him think that you were attacking the fundamental Ideas that he worshipped, or the faith that was a part of him, and you would never offend his piety. And besides all that, you could, as the comedians did, make sport of every name in the Pantheon, and he would never feel aggrieved, simply because to his simple mind, what you were attacking was not what he worshipped.

And so we return to the dictum of Hermann, that it was Deity itself against which the Greek would allow nothing to be said, while all manner of disgraceful stories were related and believed of the particular gods. For the particular gods were only beings, like human beings, but a little more powerful, or a little less moral. But the Deity itself, changing in form indeed, sometimes being for the moment represented by one god, and sometimes by another, was still in substance the outward projection of all the inward religious ideals of his soul. In it he saw everything that he knew of the noble, the powerful, the beautiful. And it he worshipped.

#### SECTION IV.

If the foregoing considerations are true, we have no longer any serious fundamental difficulty before us. The Prometheus Bound suggested no impiety to the Athenians, not because they naturally took the side of Zeus, nor because they could not appreciate the injustice of the tyrant, but because the Zeus of the play suggested himself to their minds as the divine hero of a certain ancestral legend, not as the Supreme Deity whom they worshipped.

The answer then to the question yet remaining is therefore, as regards one portion of it, very obvious. Applying the ordinary rules for the criticism of poetry, we at once conclude that the play is an ideal representation of the conflict of freedom against oppression. We will go back and accept a portion of Disen's idea, and say that the Prometheus Bound is an outgrowth of the time, and that its significance lies in the fact of the successful issue of the Persian war. Greece is ablaze with the spirit of freedom, of glory, of resistance to tyranny. To have conquered so soon arouses thoughts of what might have been had the contest been more tedious. And resolutions to be more persistent, more confident, more devoted, if ever such a disaster should again visit them, are coursing through the brains of the active-minded men of that day. And now comes

Æschylus, a man of a nature grand and gloomy, yet thoroughly patriotic, who answers as a poet should to the popular feeling, and writes this most majestic play. Into the conception he introduces perhaps, some of his own personal tendencies to a pessimistic frame of mind. And so he produces a work without a model, a work at once thoroughly Grecian and thoroughly Æschylean. But this answer is not altogether satisfactory. We wish to know whether, as Schütz has conjectured, he had, in addition to artistic aims, any special political aim. We ask too whether the play really was or was not the member of a trilogy, and, in case it was, how it could have been possible to bring about a reconciliation of Zeus and Prometheus without sacrificing the loftiness of the ideal. A few words upon this subject and I shall have completed my task.

It would be impossible to demonstrate that, under the person of Zeus, the poet has intended to represent a flesh and blood tyrant, just as it would be impossible to prove the opposite of the proposition. Schütz has with the greatest ingenuity, sought out every possible argument on his side of the question, without having succeeded in making his position sure. On the other hand, it is a general rule that the ancient tragic drama had other than political aims. Aristotle defines its office to lie in the exciting of the emotions of pity and fear. It seldom went beyond this province. If it did so in this case, we at least can never get evidence enough to be certain of the fact.

As to the Prometheus Loosed of the same poet, Hermann has affirmed that there is no evidence that it was connected with the tragedy that we have. The probabilities would seem in favor however, of the view that they were connected.(j) For, to say nothing of other considerations, we know that Æschylus produced his tragedies in Trilogies. We have here two tragedies by Æschylus on the same subject, and no other tragedies of the same author, of which we know anything, could be so allied to either of these as they are to one another. The indications then are that they were originally produced together.

All that I have been able to gather as to the Prometheus Loosed from the fragments that remain is, that the chorus of the piece is composed of Titans, and that Prometheus, in the first part of the drama I suppose, makes a speech to them somewhat in the style of his addresses to the Sea-Nymphs in the tragedy that we have. This speech is only preserved in a

Latin translation made by Cicero. Its tone has struck me as not by any means so lofty as that of the Bound Prometheus. The complaints regarding the gnawing of the vultures are too long, and too little varied by the wonted resolutions and boasts. But any judgment passed on a small fragment like this must be very partial and unsafe.

It is quite possible, however, that the lofty conception of Prometheus in the preserved tragedy, is sacrificed to the necessities of the legend in the other. For the Greeks had what was in our view of the matter, an erroneous view of the relations of plot and character in a work of dramatic art. Where the two clashed in any way, their rule was to choose to follow the necessities of the plot, and let the accessories of the character go.<sup>(k)</sup> And so the Prometheus Loosed may have lowered the lofty conception set forth in the preceding member of the trilogy, and may have brought about the reconciliation which the popular taste demanded as in accordance with the legend at the expense of the moral effect of the whole representation. If this was done, it is a pity that this last member had not been left to us as an illustration of one of the most conspicuous failings in the theory of ancient art, as viewed from the modern stand-point.

But in any case the Prometheus Bound stands as one representative of the highest attainments of Greek Literature. Our admiration for it as a work of art can only be increased when we see how in it the poetic spirit of its author was able to rise above the pettiness inherent in the legend that he believed, and to create a noble human ideal, and express a noble human feeling by sacrificing it to what he conceived. And we are forced also to admire the character of the national intellect which could never be so bound down by superstition or tradition as not to be able to appreciate beauty and sublimity wherever seen in Nature or in Art.

## NOTES.

a. (p. 4) This is proved by the following facts. In the argument to the Persae, the scholiast states that Æschylus gained a prize by the representation of the Phineus, the Persae, the Glaucus Potniensis, and the "Prometheus." Now this latter must have been a satyric drama, being represented as the fourth in the series, that is, being put after the trilogy, as the satyric drama was. Furthermore it could not have been the Prometheus Bound, or the Prometheus Loosed, and consequently it must have been the third one mentioned, namely the *Prometheus pyrrhæus* or as Dindorf prefers to emend, *pyrphoros*. Furthermore the fragments of this drama which remain, indicate the same thing, in so far as they indicate anything. See Dindorf's Æschylus, Vol. I. p. 288. Annot. ad Æsch. p. 32.

b. (p. 5) Schütz. Æsch. Vol. I. p. 200. Excurs. V. ad Prom. Vincit. "quam callide ab iis quae tum circumferebantur, de Ius et Promethei fabulis, quicquid a cothurni gravitate discreperet, separavit."

c. (p. 5) Compare Grote's remark in the first volume of his History, in the section upon Æschylus and his use of the Greek myths.

d. (p. 5) It may be thought that we cannot make such a statement as this without exaggeration. It will perhaps be claimed that Æschylus does hold, in all main particulars to the legend as given in Hesiod. It cannot however be denied that the coloring which he has given the facts is such as to put matters in quite a different light. He has omitted, as has been before remarked, all those incidents of the legend which would have a tendency to diminish our admiration for Prometheus. And the events which he has retained from his authorities have been so magnified that they have a new signification. Still more, the deliberate and wanton cruelty of Zeus, is a trait peculiar to the Prometheus of Æschylus. The other legends, if I am not mistaken, impute to Zeus carelessness, royal indifference to the rights of mankind, but never absolute and desperate tyranny. In short, were we to regard Prometheus and Zeus as real beings, and the account given in the old legends as a reliable history, were we to make ourselves members of the community in which Æschylus dwelt, we could not possibly deny that the tale as it stands altered by the dramatist, becomes a one-sided misrepresentation.

e. (p. 7) The original authorities among the German critics have been almost entirely unattainable in the preparation of this Thesis. I am indebted for a knowledge of their views to the few remarks of Grote before referred to (Note c) and to the very complete account given in the essay by Dr. Blackie on the Prometheus Bound, published in his *Horae Hellenicae*. Schütz is the only critic whose work I have been able to consult directly.

f (p. 8.) See Blackie, *Horae Hellenicae*, p. 106 sq. Blackie, although

his theory is one of those to be classed in the same division as the one in which Disson's is to be found, combats the latter theory, and on grounds that are no doubt, in a degree just. But he has one objection to it, resting on his opinion that the character of Zeus did not seem to the Athenians to be tyrannical at all, notwithstanding all that Prometheus might say about it, which seems to me altogether faulty. For, as I shall try to show further on, it is impossible that the Zeus portrayed in the Prometheus Bound, could be regarded otherwise than as a tyrant.

g (p. 11.) See Woolsey's Introduction to the Prometheus Bound.

h (p. 14.) Blackie, *Hor. Hellen.* p. 101, has advanced this view.

i (p. 14.) Schütz in his *Excursus "de intentione. et oratione trag. Prom."* has a remark which has suggested to me this thought.

j. (p. 22.) This is the view set forth by Aristotle *de Poetria*, c. 6. After speaking of the various *μέρη* of the art of tragedy, he adds: *Μεγίστον δὲ τούτων ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων σύστασις. ἣ γὰρ τραγωδία μίμησις οὐκ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ πράξεων, καὶ βίου, καὶ εὐδαιμονίας, καὶ κακοδαιμονίας — — — καὶ τὸ τέλος πράξις τίς ἐστίν, ὃν ποιότης,*" and much more to the same effect.

(k.) Addendum, p. 23. In Dindorf, *Annotations ad Æschylum*, vol. I. p. 32, the evidence on this point is summed up very concisely. The conclusion is that the connection of the dramas can be conjectured with some probability, but cannot be proved.











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